



Memorial Day Observance, Moment of Remembrance

Central Alabama Veterans Health Care System (CAVHCS) conducted its annual Memorial Day observance Monday, May 25, at the Montgomery VA Medical Center complete with patriotic songs from the Capitol Sounds, a wreath laying ceremony, a 21-gun salute and of course taps. However, this year instead of adhering to the traditional start time in the morning, the ceremony began at 2:30 pm to incorporate the National Moment of Remembrance at 3 pm.

“We decided to move the time of this year’s Memorial Day observance to incorporate the Moment of Remembrance at three o’clock,” explained CAVHCS Chief of Voluntary Service and emcee for the event to a crowd for more the 100 shortly after CAVHCS Chief Chaplain Sherman L. Burford gave the invocation. “We’re going to try our best to time it right.”

Another new aspect of this year’s observance will be CAVHCS’ new director Glen E. Struchtemeyer, who was joined by keynote speaker Air Force Col. Kris D. Beasley, commander, 42d Air Base Wing, Maxwell-Gunter Air Force Base, Ala. Director Struchtemeyer came



CAVHCS Director Glen Struchtemeyer, Col. Kris Beasley of Maxwell AFB, Army Sgt. Arthur J. Webster (l-r) and CAVHCS Voluntary Service Chief William Petty (foreground) salute the Presentation of the Colors during the 2009 Memorial Day observance at CAVHCS’ Montgomery VA Medical Center.

to CAVHCS May 1, 2009 after serving as the Director of the St. Louis VA Medical Center since August 2004.

“I got caught in the floods a couple of weeks ago with our network director returning from a rained out Stakeholder’s meeting, so I understand how the weather can be this time of year and we appreciate your joining us today,” said Struchtemeyer who served previously as Associate Director at the Gulf Coast Health Care System in Biloxi, Miss. “We’ll do our best to beat the weather, which seems to be offering me a special welcome. Nevertheless, it’s nice to be back in the Heart of the South.”

With rain clouds rolling in CAVHCS Memorial Day observance progressed with the Presentation of

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H1N1 (Swine) Flu

CAVHCS enacts aspects of Emergency Response Plan

The recent outbreak of H1N1 or Swine Flu has been reported throughout the media since late April. Fortunately Central Alabama Veterans Health Care System (CAVHCS) has not had a confirmed case affecting staff or Veterans. And, while media coverage seems to be on the decline, there are plenty of reasons to remain vigilant and informed.

“Keep in mind however, that every year from seasonal flu nearly 36,000 people die in America,” said Dr. Ron Valdiserri, Chief Consultant, Public Health Strategic Health Care Group, during a recent Department of Veterans Affairs Friday Forum national teleconference instituted shortly after

the World Health Organization (WHO) moved into Phase 4 of their Pandemic Flu posture. “So, influenza is a serious illness no matter how we look at it.” While the spread of H1N1 (Swine) Flu continues to expand globally – causing the WHO to move to Phase 5 of the Pandemic Flu posture, (one step below declaring a pandemic) – media coverage has begun to focus on the declining number of cases in Mexico. The result is the implication is that this is an indicator that the illness is fading. Unfortunately, there are two sobering realities that staff and Veterans should consider.

First, according to the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention

(CDC) website (www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/) “The virus is infecting people and is spreading from person-to-person, and has sparked a growing outbreak of illness in the United States with an increasing number of cases being reported internationally as well. CDC anticipates that there will be more cases, more hospitalizations and more deaths associated with this new virus in the coming days and weeks, because the population has little to no immunity against it.”

The second consideration is born of history. In 1918 the world

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From the Director

Glen E. Struchtemeyer



Having been here for a little more than 30 days, my comments this month will be relatively short. I am very happy to report that the cohesiveness, teamwork and willingness to focus on job accomplishment that I've seen are not only noteworthy, but undoubtedly major contributing factors to our long-term success. The contributions and teamwork from Voluntary Service and Facilities to Police and Security and our on-duty staff made our Memorial Day event was an unqualified success.

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the Colors by The Honor Guard from Maxwell AFB; the Pledge of Allegiance led by Army Sgt. Arthur J. Webster, a wreath laying ceremony; a 21-gun salute and the playing of taps exactly at 3 pm.

Of course the sentiment and purpose of the day was not lost on anyone. "Memorial Day's founding has an uncertain origin," explained Director Struchtemeyer. "Many states claim to have given it birth, but we do know that Memorial Day was baptized with the tears of families – grandmothers, mothers, daughters, and wives mostly – bending over the graves of Civil War dead of both North and South to lay flowers and offer prayers.

"The story goes that General John Logan, national commander of the Grand Army of the Republic, witnessed just such a scene of loving devotion and was moved to formally honor the fallen soldiers of both Armies.

Of course as we look forward we will have to draw upon those same traits to ensure success in; the remaining aspects of our Office of Inspector General CAP survey, ensuring all of us receiving the VISN's mandatory Family Patient Centered Care training and as we prepare to transition into using Office 2007. Be sure to review the Plan of the Week for the latest information regarding the locations and times of the VISN training as well as OI&T's introductory Office 2007 training.

Finally, thank you for the gracious welcoming ceremonies held at the Tuskegee and Montgomery campuses. I look forward to putting more faces to your names as I visit the CBOCS and clinics in June.

Logan's General Order 11, a document of our Nation's fidelity to our Veterans, has stood the test of time, and reads, in part: "...Let us, then, at the time appointed, gather around their sacred remains and garland the passionless mounds above them with the choicest flowers of spring-time; let us in this solemn presence renew our pledges to aid and assist those whom they have left among us a sacred charge upon a nation's gratitude, the soldier's and sailor's widow and orphan."

"How fitting that General Logan's charge reflected the promise President Lincoln made to Veterans and their families during his second inaugural address in 1865," added Struchtemeyer, "when he pledged that our Nation would, '...care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow and his orphan.'

I'm sure most of you here today know that timeless promise is also VA's motto and is emblazoned on plaques above, or next to, the main entrances of all our VA facilities.

CAVHCS All-Stars

To the VA Columbus Clinic Staff, Just a note to thank all of you for the good care and the kindness always shown to me. I am grateful for you all. -- With Thanks and Appreciation, R. P.

Dr. Booth, I want you to know that I am eternally grateful for the opportunity you gave me in participating in the Pain Clinic Program. You are one of the rare doctors out there that a person will forever remember because of your tender care, understanding, and extra miles that you went for us! You have helped me change my life and how I will live it from now on! Thank you! Thank you! Thank you! -- Kelly W.

To the entire Nursing staff and Care Taking Staff, Thank you from the bottom of my heart for the great care and compassion shown to my Dad, James W., while a patient in your care. Your kindness and sincerity will forever be in my memory. Some of you I know by name and others I did not know. You will all be in my prayers as I ask God to give you the strength to carry on as the great nursing staff that you are. May God Bless you all richly. -- Judy P.

The CAVHCS Salute



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Employees of the Month



Tuskegee Campus Mr. Gregg Webster

Mr. Gregg Webster has provided the 2008 All Employee Survey Assessment to Mr. Biro, VISN 7 Network Director, which encompasses

the Data Findings, Overall Facility Improvements and Notable Improvements of (2008 versus 2007 comparison). Six services were identified as having a significant decline in 2008 All Employee Survey Assessment. He requested and received Action Plans for Improvement for all six service lines.

After receiving Action Plans back from each service line he developed a Focus Group Committee which sat down with each service line staff to analyze progress and/or decline in job satisfaction, organizational assessment and cultural indexes.

Interviews were conducted over a two week period, with each service being allocated a day to provide staff to attend a session. Mr. Webster was instrumental in the success of the FY 08 AES. Mr. Webster is a "True Professional" and his attitude and service to CAVHCS is indeed commendable.

Montgomery Campus Ms Gwen Grant



Gwen Grant is the inpatient lead pharmacy technician in Montgomery, but that does not limit her to assisting on this campus alone. She has developed such an efficient system for the technical duties here that she shared her knowledge and expertise with Tuskegee. She rearranged the Pyxis medstations at Tuskegee. This has contributed to cost savings since it ensured medications in the Pyxis could be utilized before their expiration date. This is just an example of her ability to work well with others and unselfishly contribute to the goal of Pharmacy to provide cost-effective and efficient medication delivery to our Veteran patients.

Ms. Grant is also responsible for preparing the bulk of our intravenous sterile medications and for training the pharmacy technicians in Montgomery to properly prepare intravenous medications utilizing our new Mobile Isolation Chamber. This relieves the pharmacists from this duty so that they can provide more clinical services to our inpatients. Gwen Grant maintains the inpatient pharmacy in impeccable order. She is extremely hard-working and definitely goes above and beyond the call of duty.

Office 2007 coming to CAVHCS, time to get ready

The Office of Information and Technology (OI&T) has announced the nationwide deployment of Microsoft® Office 2007 to the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Why Upgrade?

More security features for better management at an Enterprise level of the Office System on desktops

- The MS Office 2007 System applications improve interacting with SharePoint 2007 and Exchange 2007
- Standardization of all desktops allows for better management of the infra-structure VA-wide.
- Expanded improvement in cross-application reuse of office documents, users can easily transfer information between applications

MS Office 2007 Features:

- The Ribbon gives visual access to tools
- Office Fluent – right tools, right time
- New SmartArt charting engine.

The Good News!

- Same functionality - New Look
- Share information with team members
- Work dynamically with others
- Automatically synchronize with team
- Improved integration throughout applications
- Keep up-to-date with notifications

Installation Schedule

The Microsoft Office 2007 deployment is scheduled to commence **July 6 – 17th**. You will be notified prior to the upgrade.

Not So Good News

The biggest problem with upgrading from earlier versions is figuring where they put everything! Since the familiar File, Edit, Insert menu system is gone; it takes a bit to figure out how to navigate Office 2007.

New MS Office 2007 Training Available in LMS

In an effort to prepare VA employees for the upgrade, O&IT will conduct overview classes during the month of June (**See Calendar and Plan of the Week**). You must enroll for the class as it is anticipated that classes will fill up quickly. Also, a series of online courses for Microsoft Office 2007 applications are being added to the VA Learning Management System (VALMS). Classroom instruction will occur later this year.

Education will be adding the LMS course to your learning plan by June 1st. After you complete them, you can reassign the course and take it as many times as necessary. It is suggested that you take advantage of as many of these courses prior to the schedule upgrade to make the transition smoother.

CAVHCS Photo Album

Images by
Robin Johnson



Memorial
Day

Nurses Week



Montgomery
Vet
Center
opens



Mandatory Training

Patient Family Centered Care

VISN 7 will be sponsoring mandatory Patient Family Centered Care training June 23-25 on the Montgomery Campus and June 30-July 1 on the Tuskegee Campus. The purpose of the training is to advance the practice of patient-and family centered care within medical centers and in clinics in the VA Southeast Network and support a processes to develop meaningful, sustained partnerships with the veterans and families served by VISN 7.

Montgomery: Multipurpose Room

Day One (Montgomery Campus –Tuesday, June 23, 2009)

Noon - 4:00 pm, Patient & Family Centered Care Training

Day Two (Montgomery Campus –June 24, 2009)

8:00 am – Noon, Patient & Family Centered Care Training

1:00 pm – 3:00 pm, Patient/Family Council and assigned staff

3:00 pm – 5:00 pm, Special session - PFCC Hospital Steering committee, Nurse Managers, Service Line Executives and Department Chiefs.

*** All attendees must have participated in the four hour training.**

Day Three (Montgomery Campus –June 25, 2009)

8:00 a.m. – Noon, Patient & Family Centered Care Training

Tuskegee: Building 90 Theater

Day One (Tuskegee Campus – Monday June 30, 2009)

7:30 am – 11:30 am, Patient & Family Centered Care Training

12:30 pm – 4:30 pm, Patient/Family Council and assigned staff

Day Two (Tuskegee Campus – July 1, 2009)

8:00 am – Noon, Patient & Family Centered Care Training

1:00 pm – 2:00 pm, Leadership Debriefing

For more information contact Rhonda H. Lewis, MSM, CTRS, CPM, Interim Patient Family Centered Care Coordinator/Family Adviser Liaison at Ext. 4439 or 4331.

Pandemic Flu Facts you should know

**** You CANNOT get H1N1 flu from eating pork!**

**** Your seasonal flu vaccination does NOT protect you from H1N1 flu. However, getting vaccinated each year is still your best protection from seasonal flu.**

**** Currently, there is NO vaccine that will protect humans from 2009 H1N1 flu.**

**** The U.S. is working on a vaccine, but it would not be available for four to six months at the earliest.**

**** Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective.**

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suffered its last major Influenza Pandemic. A study of that pandemic reveals that it lasted a little more than two years and actually had three distinct waves. A global disaster, the second and third waves were variants of the original strain and far more deadly.

Of course identifying these realities is not meant to unduly alarm staff or Veterans. The world's systems of identification and fundamental sciences are far more advanced than 1918. Organizations like the WHO and CDC are continually monitoring and tracking diseases like never before. In fact, the origins of the 1918 Pandemic Flu remain unknown, while today's variant flu strains are quickly identified along with their likeliest origin.

Instead, these considerations point to the necessity of remaining aware and vigilant to fundamental infection control etiquette habits which are proven effective to limit the spread of flu.

"This is why we conduct table top exercises," said CAVHCS Chief, Safety Management Service Deborah Morrison. "We have a CAVHCS Pandemic Flu Plan that works in conjunction with VA Central office, as well as county and state health departments. We exercise that plan to ensure our readiness and identify our processes and responsibilities, so if or when something happens – we're ready."

Elements of CAVHCS' Pandemic Flu plan were activated as the H1N1 Swine Flu spread from Mexico into the United States, and as the WHO changed its phase status. Educational material ranging from infection control posters and etiquette displays and stations were quickly produced and shared throughout CAVHCS facilities.

A major aspect of CAVHCS' efforts in providing information was - and remains - the use of electronic communications. "We developed our intranet Pandemic Flu Clearinghouse <http://vaww.visn7.med.va.gov/intranet/templates/inner.aspx?pid=151256> as part of the last Pandemic Flu Exercise, which was held several months ago," said Ms. Rose McCall, who serves as CAVHCS Webmaster and Public Affairs Office (PAO) Program Assistant. "PAO is a part of literally every table top exercise, because effective communications during any emergency situation is so vital. But, this time we decided to develop something that would actually be useful in a real world situation."

CAVHCS' Pandemic Flu Clearinghouse remains on the intranet, and shortly after the WHO and announced the existence of H1N1 (Swine) Flu a similar product was made available to everyone with an internet connection. "The Pandemic Flu Clearinghouse has links to CDC, Health and

Human Services, the VA's Pandemic Flu Plan, CAVHCS' Pandemic Flu Plan as well as flyers, posters and videos on infection control and emergency response planning," said McCall. "But since it was on the intranet only staff could access it.

"When we first heard about the WHO and CDC reports on Swine Flu it was late on a Friday afternoon, so we put a link to the CDC's latest update on the internet site, with the intention to migrate the entire clearinghouse to the internet when we were given approval to do so. But, the following Monday VA Web Communications advised us that they were developing their own link. When we put it on the website it had links to CDC, WHO and the VA just like ours did."

VA Web Communications recently removed their

portal that provided links to CDC and WHO via CAVHCS' internet site - www.centralalabama.va.gov. However, staff and Veterans can easily remain informed. "We're keeping the Clearinghouse up on the intranet, and will continue to add information as it comes

in," said McCall. "As far as the internet - we're in the process of developing an interface which will allow anyone to sign up to receive CAVHCS updates via email. Once that's up and running all Veterans will need to do, is sign up and we'll be able to keep them more in the loop."

Remaining informed and vigilant to infection control best practices are vital considerations when attempting to fend off H1N1 (Swine) Flu, but one tried and true method is expected to soon be considered the best thing anyone can do. "The VA has announced several different advisories ranging from infection control to testing and treatment," said Dr. Cliff Robinson, CAVHCS Chief of Staff, "and being informed is very important. But, what everyone should be - if they really want to be in the best position to fight off the flu - is immunized. This year's flu shot will be essential."



No matter if the World Health Organization and Centers of Disease Control and Prevention efforts to identify a vaccine for the H1N1 (Swine Flu) strain are successful, this year's Season Flu Vaccine will be an integral part of maintaining good health for Veterans and VA staff alike.



Dr. Srinivas Ginjupalli, Associate Chief of Staff, Geriatrics, served as Keynote Speaker for both Asian/Pacific American Heritage observances held on CAVHCS' Tuskegee and Montgomery campuses.

June

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1	 2 Sun Safety Week - www.sunsafetyalliance.org National Veterans Golden Age Games (Birmingham, Ala.) - www.goldenagegames.va.gov	3	4	5	 6
7	8	9	10	 11 National Vascular Nursing Week - www.svnnet.org	12	13
 14 <i>Happy Flag Day!</i>	15	16	17	18	 19	20
Father's Day  21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	Patient Family Centered Care VISN Training Mandatory for All Employees Montgomery: June 23-24 Locations TBD 			
Patient Family Centered Care VISN Training Mandatory for All Employees Tuskegee: June 29-30 Locations TBD 			Cancer from the Sun Month - www.ppsinc.org National Aphasia Awareness Month - www.aphasia.org National Hernia Awareness Month - www.herniainfo.com National Safety Month - www.nsc.org National Scleroderma Awareness Month - www.scleroderma.org Vision Research Month - www.preventblindness.org			

** OI&T will provide Microsoft Office 2007 overview & interaction courses in Tuskegee & Montgomery IT Training Rooms. All other classes will be held via V-tel. If you have any questions, please call Shai Holden at Ext. 4508.

The CAVHCS Community Calendar is not intended to be an all-inclusive, official calendar. It is intended rather to provide a medium for CAVHCS Salute to share upcoming events.

If you would like to add a CAVHCS event please email details directly to alan.bloom@va.gov. Submissions are not guaranteed to be published. Editorial considerations will be made for propriety, promptness and print space.